

REMARKS

Claims 132-148 and 153-190 now stand in the application, claims 125-131 having been canceled and new claims 183-190 having been added.

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 145-148, 153-164 and 180, and the indication of allowable subject matter recited in claims 131-137, 139 and 141-144. New claims 183-186 correspond respectively to a combination of claim 131 with each of parent claims 127-130, and claims 132-137 have been amended to depend from claims 183-186, so that claims 183-186, 132-137 and 141-144 now correspond identically to claims 131-137 and 141-144 indicated by the examiner as containing allowable subject matter. Claims 187-190 have been added to correspond respectively to the combination of claims 138 and 139 with each of parent claims 127-130, so that claims 187-190 correspond to claim 139 indicated by the examiner as containing allowable subject matter. Claims 183-186, 132-137, 187-190, 141-148, 153-164 and 180 therefore correspond to the claims favorably considered by the examiner in the Office action. In addition, all of the rejected claims have either been canceled or amended to depend directly or indirectly from one of the allowable claims. Accordingly allowance is now requested of all pending claims.

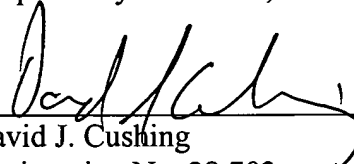
The undersigned directs the attention of the Office to MPEP 707.02 which provides that an application pending for more than five years will be considered “special” with a view to expeditious completion of its proceedings. The present application was filed well over five years ago. Accordingly, “special” examination status is respectfully requested.

Appl. No. 09/274,979
Amendment

In view of the above, it is believed that all of the claims remaining in the application are in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited. If there are any issues remaining which the examiner believes could be resolved through either a supplemental response or an examiner's amendment, the examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned at the local exchange indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,


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